

*HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE*

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and revered those who, however worthily or unworthily, represented it to the world. The Western Catholic is as free as anyone else to come to his insight into the fullness of the meaning of Christianity but he has a certainty held with profound gratitude that when he is in his Church he will not unwittingly find strange gods upon the altars. 795 779

In any event, the quest for reunion continued and reached, as has been indicated, an initial nadir during the period of the Crusades and a moment of optimistic hopefulness at the Councils of Ferrara and Florence during the fifteenth century. Only a brief reference to either is possible here. The Crusaders, who were roused by eloquent preachers like St. Bernard to take up arms and make the long journey eastward to wrest the Holy Places associated with the life and death of Our Lord from the Turks, served a consecrated cause; but many of them were very human, indeed. Some historians conclude from the sermons of St. Bernard and other preachers of the time that the purely mundane benefits which accrued to the men who took up the Cross were so great that many ruffians (contrary to romantic historians, the Middle Ages had their share of them) embarked on the adventure. It is also evident that although the Crusades owed their origin to an appeal for help from the Byzantine Emperor, to which the monks of Cluny responded as best they could, the net cultural result was that the East was not only disappointed in what the West could achieve but disgusted with the conduct of the armies, even as since that time many another occupied country has been with foreign soldiers who have been billeted on its soil. On the other hand, the West heard many a report about the corruption and venality of the East, even as the home people in this our day have listened to shocking stories of lands which their soldier sons have seen. It must be added that the subsequent continued dominion of the Turks likewise dampened the ardor of friendship. 175 95 797 ●